



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW
SCHOOL OF
THOUGHT**

STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS:

STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

"Student Success does not arise by chance. It requires an intentional, structured, and proactive set of strategies that are systematic and carefully aligned to the goal of student success."

Professor Vincent Tinto
First Year Experience Symposium
QUT, Brisbane, February 2009

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The VU Student Experience Strategy

The Strategies for Student Success Commitment in the Making VU Program, the University's blueprint for the future up to 2016, developed a set of Guiding Principles in 2008 in consultation with a range of committees on which they based their research papers. These original Guiding Principles were developed to inform the VU Student Experience Strategy and were informed by the Head of School consultation report (Mapping Current Practice at VU). The subsequent report, National and Global Practice, provided further evidence of successful strategies used in other institutions which supported the Guiding Principles.

These principles have now been revised into their current format post the Bradley Review – the Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report. The revised list of VU's six Guiding Principles (GPs) appears directly below and is followed by a comparative table (Table 1) that aligns VU's Guiding Principles with the twelve challenges and strategies that the Bradley Review lists as key indicators of a quality student experience (p79). It is important to note that, whilst the Strategy has been informed by the Bradley Review in part, it has been developed to ensure that our multi-sector profile and our diverse student population are at the core of all recommended actions.

| Principle Number | Guiding Principle description | Sponsor |
|------------------|--|----------------------------|
| GP1 | Providing engaging courses and pathways that meet student needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multi-sector offerings to improve employability, including pathways into postgraduate studies - assisting learners to be job-ready, career-ready, future-ready | PVC Institutional Services |
| GP2 | Extending learning and teaching approaches that put the student at the centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inside and outside the classroom, - learning in the workplace and community - moving from teaching to supporting student learning | PVC Teaching and Learning |
| GP3 | Recognising and responding to student diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diagnosing and responding to student needs - enhancing learning, language and numeracy development - acknowledging the financial and cultural and linguistic diversity of students | Dean, VU College |
| GP4 | Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student to student and student to staff both inside and outside the classroom - industry and community learning partners - student leadership and socialisation - responsive administrative and student support services | PVC Students |
| GP5 | Fostering environments that enable active student learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diverse spaces and places - virtual environment - Learning Commons - on and off campus | PVC Students |
| GP6 | Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-entry information and advice - throughout study to aid progression and retention - pre-completion and employment. | PVC Students |

Table 1: A quality student experience: a comparative table

| VU Student Experience Strategy | Bradley Review challenges and strategies: A quality student experience in higher education |
|--|--|
| GP1: Providing engaging courses and pathways that meet student needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to well-designed and engaging courses that lead to good vocational outcomes. |
| GP2: Extending learning and teaching approaches that put the student at the centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers who are accessible and responsive to learners. • Interaction with teachers that builds a commitment to the students' chosen discipline. |
| GP3: Recognising and responding to student diversity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being treated as an individual. • A welcoming and inclusive environment. |
| GP4: Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive administrative and student support services. • Presence of a supportive peer group. • Access to extra-curricular activities such as clubs and societies. |
| GP5: Fostering environments that enable active student learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good-quality teaching and learning spaces and library and information technology support. • An accessible and sophisticated online learning environment. • Physical places and facilities that allow informal socialisation. |
| GP6: Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way communication about matters that pertain to their academic progress. |

The *VU Student Experience Strategy* has been framed across the period 2008-2010 and is aligned with the four Student Groups. Responses to the Student Barometer (online survey of the student experience) will be used as a key indicator in assessing the satisfaction with, and effectiveness of, the actions within the Strategy. The Strategy Action Framework will also continue to be informed by information gleaned from surveys such as the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE).

Stephen Weller

Pro Vice-Chancellor Students

13 March 2009

Section 1: Differentiating the Student Experience

1.1 Background

The purpose of this paper is to provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the VU student experience, and of actions and initiatives to enhance it. The strategy builds upon the key activities and research from across the student experience in 2008, and the Making VU Program, including:

- The Diversity and Performance of the Student Population
- The Student Experience Definitions Framework
- The Pathways that Matter at Victoria University
- The Strategies for Student Success Guiding Principles
- The review of VU Current Practice
- The review of National and Global Practice
- 2008/2009 International Plan
- Aitken-Mitchell findings and the VU Diamond Model
- Differentiating the Student Experience (July 2008)
- Making VU 2016: Statement of Purpose
- Reports from the Postcompulsory Education Centre
- The Bradley Review

1.2 Context

The Rudd Labour Government has come to power with a strong focus on social inclusion, which links directly to the Government's productivity and participation agenda. Social inclusion is about putting people at the centre of policy development, where all levels of government work in partnership with business and the not-for-profit sector to address the array of different needs. VU has long been committed to working with people from all backgrounds to give them the education and training options they need.

The Bradley Review of the Australian Tertiary Education sector provides the University with a key opportunity to respond to the agenda of the new Federal Government and to allow for the alignment of key strategies in support of the student experience around the diverse student groups that make up the VU student population.

1.3 VU's Diamond Model

The Diamond Model for innovation in teaching and learning and related partnerships and customisation was developed by Professor Don Aitkin and Dr John Mitchell to provide a common perspective on teaching and learning across all VU sectors. The model offers a visual metaphor of teaching and learning at VU that is designed to provide staff and students, no matter where they work or what course they are undertaking, with a sense of the teaching and learning carried out in the University. It also highlights the University's connections with its partners and communities and with the University's own Making VU strategy.

"The University's set of logos provides the diamond shape. The gold border embraces both the University's staff and its partners, who work together to achieve value-added outcomes for VU's students, so that they become work-ready, career-ready and future-ready. In doing so the University also adds value to its partners and to its communities. What is more, while the staff work to affect positively the students' outcomes, so the students, in the sheer diversity of their backgrounds and expectations, affect the staff: the arrows go both ways. Each face of the diamond can be drilled down

to illuminate the actual strategies that are being used or could be developed.”
(Aitkin and Mitchell, 2008, p2)

FIGURE 1: THE DIAMOND MODEL



1.4 Student Population

Having identified four groups of students, the University's key challenge is aligning services, programs and products around them while still responding to individual needs and retaining a holistic approach to the student experience. A differentiated approach to the diverse student population could have significant implications for structure, budget, infrastructure, HE, VE and FE directions, and compacts.

The next phase of the Student Segmentation Study is the preparation of faculty, campus and cluster student segmentation reports. These reports will provide further detail to Heads of Faculty and Heads of School about the diversity of the VU student population and will allow for a more detailed implementation of the strategies contained within this paper.

1.5 Student Barometer

The University will also, during 2009, be able to inform the development of the strategies within this paper with the release of the results of the VU Student Barometer. This online student survey across the key aspects of learning, life and support captured the views of more than 5000 students including over 1,000 international students. The detailed pivot tables from the Student Barometer data will provide benchmarked views of how students perceive their VU student experience and this will, in turn, allow for measurable progress across the strategies contained in this paper.

Figure 2: Student Barometer, 2008

- Over 5000 VU students completed online survey
- Approximately 1 in 10 of total students, 1 in 25 of International Students
- Results indicate favourable levels of student satisfaction and favourable benchmarking

| Element | VU Total | VU Local | VU International | Benchmark |
|----------|---------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | <i>n=5238</i> | <i>n=4067</i> | <i>n=1171</i> | <i>n=49,014</i> |
| Arrival | 85% | 85% | 82% | 80% |
| Learning | 90% | 90% | 87% | 84% |
| Living | 89% | 90% | 85% | 85% |
| Support | 84% | 85% | 82% | 82% |
| Overall | 89% | 89% | 88% | 86% |

Student Priorities 2009 and beyond

Preparation of 'Student Diversity Reports' at the level of Faculty, Campus and Cluster supported by localised reports with CEO/GDS/Student Dividend/Student Barometer data also at the level of Faculty, Campus and Cluster.

Generation of 'Balanced Student Scorecards' for Heads of Faculty (and Service Directors) that identify needs and perceptions of Student Groups at the level of Faculty, Campus and Cluster so as to align programs and services.

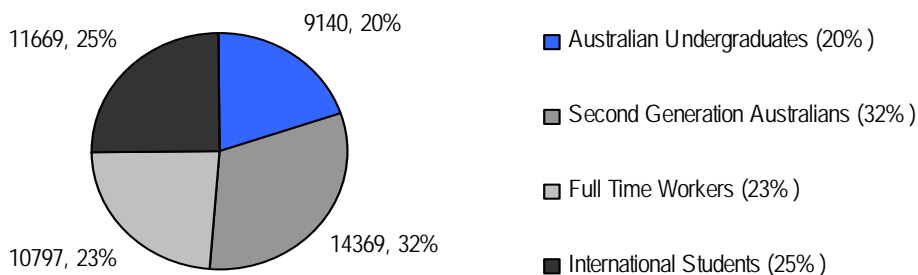
Ensure VU is well positioned to respond to 'learning entitlements' & 'contestability' with a distinct student experience around LiWC, partnerships and enabling environment.

Support Statement of Purpose with targeted strategies within the VU Student Experience Strategy framed around the 'Guiding Principles' and the 'Balanced Student Scorecards'.

Section 2: Who Are Our Students? Understanding Student Diversity

VU has refined its understanding of its students, their diversity and performance through the report "The Diversity and Performance of the Student Population at Victoria University – A Preliminary Analysis" (Messinis, Sheehan & Miholicic, 2008) which examines the student population over 2003 to 2007 to identify groups of like students. This report provides VU with a much clearer understanding of its student groups. The report will assist the University to better tailor services to students and address factors that influence student progress rates. The report identifies four VU student groups:

Figure 3: VU Student Groups, All Students, 2007



2.1 Group 1: Australian Undergraduates (20%)

- Relatively young
- Relatively high socio-economic indexes for area (SEIFA) score but lower than Melbourne mean
- Part-time employment
- Full-time studies in higher education and degree courses
- Evenly distributed between English and Languages Other than English

2.2 Group 2: Second Generation Australians (32%)

- Relatively mature-aged
- Relatively very low SEIFA score
- Detached from the labour force
- Part-time studies in VE and FE sectors, but also postgraduates
- Second-generation Australians and mainly from Asia and Africa
- A Language Other than English spoken at home

2.3 Group 3: Full Time Workers (23%)

- Relatively high SEIFA score but lower than Melbourne mean
- Employed, mainly on full-time basis
- Part-time studies in VE and FE sectors but also postgraduates
- Third-generation English-speaking Australians

2.4 Group 4: International Students (25%)

- Onshore, full time, full fee paying students
- Offshore TAFE students (largest group)
- Onshore HE full fee paying degree students

The analysis of student progression rates for 2007 provided in the report enhances the findings of the existing literature, including previous studies of progress and retention rates at VU.

2.5 Key Findings

Irrespective of student groups, sector analysis of progress rates (a key measure of student success) showed the following results:

HE students are more likely to succeed if they are:

- older
- female
- studying full time
- of higher SES status
- from an English-speaking background.

VE/FE students are more likely to succeed if they are:

- older
- working
- of higher SES status
- first generation Australian
- from Melbourne's West.

HE students in the Second Generation Australians or Full Time Workers Groups were more likely to succeed. In contrast to HE, VE/FE students in the Second Generation Australians or Full Time Workers Groups were less likely to succeed. An overview of the VU student population has been prepared in brochure format; this document is attached as Appendix 1.

Section 3: Strategy Action Framework

The Strategy Action Framework builds on the information gathered from wide-ranging research undertaken by the Strategies for Student Success Project Team (see *Section 1.1 Background* and *Section 4 of this paper for more detail*). Informed by the findings of this research, and the information provided on pages 1 & 2 of this paper, the Framework articulates a series of actions designed to improve the student experience at VU. These actions have been prepared in collaboration with the members of the Student Experience Advisory Group. A Gantt Chart outlining timelines for the framework is attached as Appendix 2.

3.1 Guiding Principle 1: Providing engaging courses and pathways that meet student needs

Sponsor: PVC Institutional Services

Guiding Principle 1

Providing engaging courses and pathways that meet student needs

- multi-sector offerings designed to improve employability, including pathways into postgraduate studies
- assisting learners to be job-ready, career-ready, future-ready

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|---|--|
| 1.1 Develop, implement and evaluate a Pathways Database for both prospective and current students that include clear and transparent articulation arrangements. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Director, SMS Futures | Develop: Nov 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.2 Review management of and support for course and pathway approval processes in conjunction with faculties | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Nov 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.3 Prepare a 2009-2011 Admissions and Recruitment Strategy that includes an emphasis on enhanced student pathways and targeted future student enquiries. | <u>PVC Students</u> Director, Student Connections Director, MCD | Develop: Apr 2009 Implement: Oct 2009 Evaluate: Mar 2010 |
| 1.4 Develop, implement and evaluate a common unit of study currency across the FE/VE/HE sectors. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Director, SMS Futures | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.5 Develop, implement and evaluate a Student Electives Policy for courses at VU. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.6 Evaluate pathways undertaken by students across VU, benchmark across the tertiary education sector, and identify where new pathways need to be developed. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Apr 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Jun 2010 |
| 1.7 Develop alternative entry and exit points in courses across each of the course clusters and sectors at VU. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.8 Develop a course based on a multi-disciplinary program of study similar to the Bachelor of Multidisciplinary Studies at UTEP. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Dean, VU College Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2010 Implement: Feb 2011 Evaluate: Nov 2011 |
| 1.9 Review and streamline the use of RPL across the University by reviewing the Learning Pathways and Qualifications Linkages Policy. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.10 Include relevant Course Cluster Committee and Roundtable recommendations into the course review process. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 1.11 Identify course-related staffing barriers to cross-sectoral learning and teaching and develop strategies to minimise them. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Dean, VU College Director, HR | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |

3.2 Guiding Principle 2: Extending learning and teaching approaches that put the student at the centre

Sponsor: PVC Teaching and Learning

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| <p>Guiding Principle 2</p> <p>Using learning and teaching approaches that put the student at the centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inside and outside the classroom - learning in the workplace and community - moving from teaching to supporting student learning |
|--|

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|--|---|--|
| 2.1 Develop, implement and evaluate a University-wide educational transition strategy for commencing students. | <u>Dean, VU College</u> Director, CILT Director, Student Engagement | Develop: Jul 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.2 Develop, implement and evaluate transition units of study that combine both extended orientation and course content. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Apr 2010 Implement: Jul 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.3 Include active, collaborative learning approaches as a requirement for the approval of all first-year units of study. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Jul 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.4 Develop, implement and evaluate processes for the early identification of, and rapid response to, major learning gaps in disciplinary knowledge, literacy and numeracy. | <u>Dean, VU College</u> Director, CILT Heads of Faculty | Develop: Nov 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.5 Evaluate the effectiveness of the Student Assessment and Progress Policy in identifying and helping at-risk students. | <u>PVC Teaching and Learning</u> | Report: Feb 2010 |
| 2.6 Develop, pilot and evaluate a learning communities model for commencing students. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Nov 2009 Pilot: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.7 Develop, pilot and evaluate a learning in the community model for use in units of study taken by commencing students. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service | Develop: Nov 2009 Pilot: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.8 Develop, deploy and evaluate learning resources for learning in the workplace and the community (including templates, preparatory materials and evaluation tools) for staff, students and industry/community partners. | <u>Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service</u> Project Coordinator, LiWC Director, CILT | Develop: Sep 2009 Deploy: Nov 2009 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 2.9 Review existing strategies for the induction, professional development, reward and recognition of teaching staff to ensure that they foster the changes in teaching practice required for learning in the workplace and the community. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Director, HR | Review: Sep 2009 Action changes: Feb 2010 |

3.3 Guiding Principle 3: Recognising and responding to student diversity

Sponsor: Dean, VU College

Guiding Principle 3

Recognising and responding to student diversity

- diagnosing and responding to student needs
- enhancing learning, language and numeracy development
- acknowledging the financial and cultural and linguistic diversity of students

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|--|--|
| 3.1 Review existing learning and teaching policies and guidelines to incorporate the University's English Language Support and Development Strategy. | <u>PVC, Teaching and Learning</u> Associate Director, Language and Learning | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.2 Increase the requirement for the embedding of language and numeracy development into course curricula through course approval and review requirements. | <u>Associate Director, Language and Learning</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.3 Develop, pilot and evaluate a suite of tools that will effectively and efficiently assess the language and numeracy levels of all commencing students. | <u>Associate Director, Language and Learning</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.4 Review and improve faculty-based processes to identify, support and monitor students requiring support with their learning and incorporate the use of the Student Management System to identify students and record support activities. | <u>PVC, Teaching and Learning</u> Director, SMS Futures Associate Director, Language and Learning Heads of Faculty | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.5 Develop in partnership with faculties a range of student support interventions, including online support and developmental units of study. | <u>Associate Director, Language and Learning</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.6 Extend the use of peer mentors to assist other students in developing their learning, language and numeracy skills. | <u>Associate Director, Language and Learning</u> Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service | Develop: Apr 2009 Implement: Jun 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 3.7 Review current arrangements for the payment of fees by low income earners particularly within VE/FE. | <u>Director, Student Engagement</u> Director, Student Connections | Develop: Apr 2009 Implement: Jun 2009 Evaluate: Sep 2009 |

3.4 Guiding Principle 4: Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement

Sponsor: PVC Students

Guiding Principle 4

Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement

- student to student and student to staff both inside and outside the classroom
- industry and community learning partners
- student leadership and socialisation
- responsive administrative and student support services

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|--|--|
| 4.1 Develop and coordinate a University-wide orientation program that is targeted in terms of content, timeliness and activities for the student groups and institutional courses on each campus. | <u>Director, Student Engagement</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Mar 2010 |
| 4.2 Develop a targeted training program for teaching, administrative and student support staff to improve the quality of relationships with students. | <u>Director, HR</u> Director, CILT | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Oct 2009 |
| 4.3 Develop a Student Leadership strategy that provides opportunities and recognition for a diverse range of student activities, including faculty-based student societies. | <u>Director, Student Engagement</u> Student Leadership Project Coordinator | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 4.4 Develop the Student Leadership Council by means of an induction and training program and an annual student leadership conference. | <u>Director, Student Engagement</u> Student Leadership Project Coordinator | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Apr 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 4.5 Develop strategies and resources for engaging and supporting industry and community partners in Learning in the Workplace and Community activities. | <u>Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Sep 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 4.6 Create Student Experience and Student Leadership Funds to enhance the student experience post-VSU outcomes. | <u>PVC Students</u> Director, Student Engagement President, VUSU | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Jun 2009 Evaluate: Mar 2010 |
| 4.7 Explore the provision of an annual financial allocation to support student employment at VU. | <u>Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service</u> Director, Student Engagement | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 4.8 Provide increased opportunities for student employment on campus to build relationships, engagement and connectedness. | <u>Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service</u> Director, Student Engagement | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Oct 2009 |
| 4.9 Progress the recommendations of the Student Accommodation Futures Paper to improve access to student accommodation. | <u>PVC Students</u> Manager, Student Operations | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Dec 2009 Evaluate: Mar 2010 |

3.5 Guiding Principle 5: Fostering environments that enable active student learning

Sponsor: PVC Students

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|--|
| <p>Guiding Principle 5</p> <p>Fostering environments that enable active student learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diverse spaces and places - virtual environment - Learning Commons - on and off campus |
|--|

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|--|---|--|
| 5.1 Develop and extend the Learning Commons at every campus, including improving student access through extended opening hours where needed. | <u>University Librarian</u> Associate Director, Language & Learning Director, Facilities | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Jun 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 5.2 Design and provide good quality teaching and learning spaces that encourage the use of active and collaborative learning approaches. | <u>PVC Students</u> Director, Facilities Director, ITS | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 5.3 Review the availability of both space and support for postgraduate students. | <u>Director, Postgraduate Research</u> Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Jun 2010 |
| 5.4 Improve and develop the number of informal places where students can gather at course, faculty and campus level. | <u>Director, Facilities</u> Director, Student Engagement | Develop: Nov 2009 Implement: Jun 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 5.5 Increase access to the virtual learning environment to assist students, staff and VU partners, particularly for off-campus and offshore learning activities. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Director, ITS | Develop: Nov 2009 Implement: Jun 2010 Evaluate: Nov 2010 |
| 5.6 Extend the use of eLearning 2.0 technologies and mobile learning technologies to enhance student-centred learning and teaching. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Director, ITS | Develop: Mar 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |
| 5.7 Ensure that every unit has a minimum online presence that is consistent with its learning outcomes. | <u>Director, CILT</u> Director, ITS | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Jul 2009 Evaluate: Nov 2009 |

3.6 Guiding Principle 6: Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers

Sponsor: PVC Students

| |
|---|
| <p>Guiding Principle 6</p> <p>Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-entry - throughout study to aid progression and retention - pre-completion and employment |
|---|

| Action | Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|--|--|
| 6.1 Establish a pre-entry advising system which includes outreach to primary and secondary schools, community and industry organisations, and prospective international students. | <u>Dean, VU College</u> Project Manager, VU College Gateways Director, MCD | Develop: Jun 2009 Implement: Sep 2009 Evaluate: Mar 2010 |
| 6.2 Review the course information available to prospective and enquiring students in terms of its comprehensiveness, accuracy and accessibility. | <u>Director, CAPS</u> Heads of Faculty Project Manager, VU College Gateways | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 6.3 Establish a Student Advising Centre that provides commencing Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor cohorts with mandatory advising and provides optional advising services to other students. | <u>PVC Students</u> Project Co-ordinator, Strategies for Student Success | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Mar 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 6.4 Develop an efficient system that enables the early identification of at-risk students by faculties to link with early active intervention in partnership with the Student Advising Centre. | <u>Associate Director, Language and Learning</u> Heads of Faculty Project Co-ordinator, Strategies for Student Success | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 6.5 Develop an online advising service to supplement face-to-face advising. | <u>Project Coordinator, Strategies for Student Success</u> Project Director, Web Futures | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 6.6 Provide opportunities for peer advisers to be employed in the Student Advising Centre. | <u>Project Co-ordinator, Strategies for Student Success</u> Associate Director, Learning for Work and Community Service Director, Student Engagement | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |
| 6.7 Develop a VU Advising Council with members from each faculty and each group of specialist advisers (academic, careers, learning support, advocates & counsellors) to establish and enhance a triage role for the Student Advising Centre in terms of a referral system. | <u>Project Co-ordinator, Strategies for Student Success</u> Director, Student Engagement Dean, VU College Heads of Faculty | Develop: Oct 2009 Implement: Feb 2010 Evaluate: Oct 2010 |

3.7 Summary of management implementation responsibility for actions within the Strategy Action Framework

The table below is a summary of management implementation responsibility for each action within the Student Experience Strategy. The Commitment 3 Project Team will liaise regularly with the nominated staff members to ensure that progress on each action is accurately reported at monthly Student Experience Advisory Group (SEAG) meetings. SEAG will serve as the Steering Committee for the Strategy's implementation.

Table 2: Summary of management implementation responsibility for actions within the Strategy Action Framework

| Department / Unit Responsibility | Primary Responsibility | C3 project liaison |
|---|------------------------|--|
| Director CILT 1.8; 1.11; 2.2; 2.3; 2.6; 2.7; 2.9; 5.5; 5.6; 5.7 | 10 | C3 Project Coordinator |
| Director CAPS 1.1; 1.2; 1.4; 1.5; 1.6; 1.7; 1.9; 1.10; 6.2 | 9 | CAPS Project Officer |
| Associate Director Language and Learning 3.2; 3.3; 3.5; 3.6; 6.4 | 5 | C3 Project Officer |
| PVC Students 1.3; 4.6; 4.9; 5.2; 6.3 | 5 | C3 Project Coordinator |
| Director Student Engagement 3.7; 4.1; 4.3; 4.4 | 4 | C3 Project Officer Student Leadership Project Coordinator |
| Associate Director Work and Community Service 2.8; 4.5; 4.7; 4.8 | 4 | C3 Project Officer |
| Dean VU College 2.1; 2.4; 6.1 | 3 | C3 Project Officer |
| PVC Teaching and Learning 2.5; 3.1; 3.4 | 3 | C3 Project Coordinator |
| Project Coordinator Strategies for Student Success 6.5; 6.6; 6.7 | 3 | C3 Project Coordinator |
| Director Facilities 5.4 | 1 | C3 Project Officer |
| Director HR 4.2 | 1 | C3 Project Officer |
| University Librarian 5.1 | 1 | C3 Project Officer |
| Director Postgraduate Research 5.3 | 1 | C3 Project Officer |
| Total | 50 | |

Section 4: Current VU, National and Global Practice

The Student Experience Strategy has been developed using wide-ranging research gathered from a broad range of documents as indicated in Section 1.1, Background, of this paper (p3). However the two major reports written by the Strategies for Student Success Project Team – Mapping Current Practice at VU and National and Global Practice - provide the most focussed information in terms of understanding how the actions in the Student Experience Strategy have been developed. A condensed and merged version of these two reports is provided below.

Mapping Current Practice at VU presents the findings of consultations with all Heads of School across all sectors of VU, undertaken between June and August 2008. The purpose of these consultations was to identify what Heads of School thought their School was doing well, what gaps existed and what strategies for improvement they could suggest in relation to enhancing the student experience.

National and Global Practice provides four case study examples of good practice for each of the six Guiding Principles, covering tertiary institutions in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The purpose of this report was to provide a synopsis of emerging themes in a range of strategic areas that impact on the student experience. For further information on each case study, including references, please consult the full report.

It should be noted that, as explained on page 1 of this document, the following reports were prepared late 2008 and were therefore documented in a format that aligned with the Guiding Principles as they existed at that time. The information and evidence provided however, forms the basis of good practice around the globe from which the actions recommended in the VU Student Experience Strategy have been drawn. The following section provides a brief explanation of each of the original Guiding Principles, followed by a summary of current VU, national and global practice in areas directly linked to that Principle, based on the findings of these two key reports.

4.1 Student Decision Making

Guiding Principle 1

Supporting Informed Student Decision Making, including advising provided by staff and fellow students; pre entry, throughout study, and pre completion and employment.

A recent Postcompulsory Education Centre (PEC) report on academic advising concluded that effective advising systems have been shown to improve student progress and retention, especially for students who start with limited knowledge of tertiary education (Gabb, 2007). The analysis reported in 'The Diversity and Performance of the Student Population at Victoria University: A Preliminary Analysis' (Messinis, Sheehan & Miholcic, 2008) clearly indicates that VU has a large cohort of students that would benefit from specialist advice, such as first in family to attend a university and those who articulate from VE/FE to HE. The PEC report 'Student Decision-Making at Victoria University' (Milne, Kostanski, Cara & Andison, 2008) made two recommendations relating to informed student

decision-making: that VU ensure “pre-transition support for prospective and commencing students be strengthened by improving access to information about courses and course-specific student support” and that VU develop “an integrated student advising service that includes pre-entry course and careers advising”.

Heads of School Consultation

The Strategies for Student Success: Mapping Current Practice at VU report (November 2008) clearly articulates that, if VU is to improve its student retention rate, it needs to ensure that pre-entry course advice for prospective and articulating students is timely, accurate, clear, is appropriately targeted, and includes relevant pathways. Improved online course advice that is easy to find and navigate and is clearly understandable for both local and international students would also assist more appropriate course selection by students.

Heads of School also identified the need for a more consistent approach to the provision of advice to students during a course. This consistency needs to occur across sectors, within faculties and within schools in terms of putting effective processes in place, including the provision of adequate time allowances for staff undertaking this role.

The need for a consistent approach to advising students identified as at-risk was also a concern expressed by many Heads of School. Mandatory advising at critical tipping points (tipping a student further into a course or tipping them out with dignity) was suggested as a process for more equitable treatment of students at risk, and more equitable from a time perspective for staff across the sectors. The availability of general staff or student advisers to assist other time-consuming student concerns such as travel concession and scholarship applications was also suggested.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies in the Strategies for Student Success: National and Global Practice report (December 2008) under this Guiding Principle are:

Valdosta State University's (VSU) Student Success Centre in Georgia which operates on a triage system where advisees are referred to other support services on campus for any academic, personal or emotional difficulty that requires specialist support and/or counselling.

The integral part played by First Year Advisers at Griffith University (Griffith) in building relationships between students and staff, both academic and general, and in aiding student leadership and development opportunities by identifying both at-risk and high-achieving students and linking them together into programs.

The use of diagnostic testing results by South Plains College in Texas (SPC) to inform course advice, which is inextricably linked with career and life goals. This is considered a key component of the success of the student advising model at this Community College.

The Academic Advising Centre at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), which is an excellent case study on mandatory advising for at-risk students and the importance of collaboration between all centres that advise students – central, faculty, careers and learning support.

Common themes in these case studies are the importance of well-informed advice prior to both course and unit of study selection (VSU, Griffith, SPC), early identification of at-risk students followed by early active intervention (all), mandatory advising for particular cohorts of students (all), the added value of peer advisers for both the advisers and the advisees (Griffith, UTEP), and the increased effectiveness of providing advice to students when collaboration exists between the various faculties and other organisational units (VSU, SPC, UTEP).

A report with a specific focus on recommending a Student Advising model for VU is being prepared in parallel with this Strategy.

4.2 Student Relationships

Guiding Principle 2

Strengthening Student Relationships with all staff, fellow students, employers and communities across the diverse spaces and places in which learning occurs.

This Guiding Principle is based on research demonstrating that, because learning is a social activity, students who engage with the university community are more likely to involve themselves in activities that enhance their learning. It also draws our attention to the fact that learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom and involves other people as well as students and staff members. A critical area here is the entry of new students to the University, where strategies such as collaborative learning, active learning and learning in the community have been shown to encourage both social engagement and academic achievement. Another important focus is how well the broader campus environment, virtual as well as real, supports the development of student relationships.

Heads of School Consultation

Because the Guiding Principles had not been developed at the time of these consultations, they did not focus explicitly on strengthening student relationships. However, some themes related to this Principle were raised and the summary that follows focuses on these themes.

Most Heads of School believe that attention to transition assists both the social and academic engagement of students and equate it with orientation and induction. Most focused on campus-based orientation and faculty, school and course-based induction. Some used these terms interchangeably, others interpreted them differently. With few exceptions, transition is considered to be primarily an issue of concern for commencing students, including articulators, rather than for those who are well on their way in their student journey.

Opinions on the effectiveness of campus-based orientation activities varied depending upon the sector, the campus, the timing of intake and class start dates. When discussing faculty, school and course-based induction, Heads of School differed in their primary focus with some emphasising the need to engage students in learning as their primary goal, whilst others emphasised the necessity to impart key information associated with university support services, administrative procedures and, in some cases, occupational health and safety.

Examples of good practice are found in the orientation booklets of several schools across the sectors; the use of later year students as hosts and mentors (including in the Faculty of Workforce Development where these students receive academic credit for this activity), the use of active and collaborative learning in Problem Based Learning in engineering and the growing use of transition units of study, such as Knowing and Knowledge (Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development) and Professional Development 1 (Faculty of Business and Law). The latter units are designed to engage students with one another and with the language of their discipline area, as well as providing learning skills development and clarity around the expectations associated with assessment in that course.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies included in the National and Global Practice report under this Guiding Principle are:

The First Year Experience Intervention and Support program at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) which uses a systematic approach to identify at-risk students and their student management system to record indicators and follow-up actions. The use of students to help other students is central to the effectiveness of this approach.

The Student Success Centre at Valdosta State University (VSU) which has as its focus a hub where students are able to access a range of services in one location. The concept and design provides both easy access and a holistic approach which enhances engagement and connectedness.

York University's (York) extensive orientation program where attendance is mandated and programs are run for a whole range of student cohorts to ensure that all students experience the initiation process. All programs are developed and organised by staff and senior students, and programs include academic orientation by each faculty, social orientation by a variety of student leadership groups and clubs, targeted orientation programs for cohorts such as Mature and Transfer Students, Students with a Disability, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Students, and Parent Orientation (more recently adopted by the University of Melbourne). The extensive overall program involves a large percentage of this Canadian institution's 50,000 students and lays the foundation for building relationships between students with similar interests and between staff and students.

The Noel-Levitz award winning Comprehensive Retention Plan at South Plains College in Texas (SPC) which places an emphasis on advising particular student groups, an early alert system to identify those groups most likely to leave prior to completion, and individualised learning plans, either completed one-on-one with an adviser or online in a more generic model.

Common themes in these case studies are the use of university-wide strategies (all), some of which are at multiple levels – campus, faculty, school, course, student cohorts (York, SPC), the use of peers (all) and active early contact (AUT, York, South Plains). Many, or all, of these components may well strengthen relationships and aid retention at VU.

4.3 Learning Pathways

Guiding Principle 3

Improving Learning Pathways that maximise the flexibility of our multi-sector offerings and meet student needs by improving their employability and their effectiveness as lifelong learners.

This Guiding Principle focuses on enhancing the development of pathway opportunities for students in each sector, as well providing recognition of previous study and work experiences of prospective students. The Principle also has a strong focus on students being able to pick and choose their units of study across faculties and sectors, within the framework of professional accreditation requirements and staffing capacity to teach these units.

Heads of School Consultation

The availability and promotion of pathways between sectors, particularly in relation to VE→HE but also HE→VE, was frequently raised by Heads of School. Some members of staff are reluctant to encourage students to articulate into a HE course from a diploma or advanced diploma course before completing their VE course, as well as reluctant to recommend that a student undertake VE studies if they are struggling with their HE studies. The perceived challenges are better promotion of existing pathways between sectors, the development of new pathways between courses in different sectors that encourage students to take these pathways, and the development of pathways from HE to VE courses.

Encouraging staff to teach in more than one sector and developing processes for sharing facilities across FE/VE/HE were identified as desirable strategies. The need for closer ties between FE, VE and HE staff was a consistent theme.

Recognition of learning gained during industry experience or previous studies in FE or VE was a frequently raised issue. Heads of School noted the need for improved advice when students commence their studies to ensure that their previous learning is assessed and recognised where appropriate.

Elective choice options could be broadened if students were encouraged to choose units of study offered by other faculties, within and across sectors. Heads of School noted that opening up elective choice in this way would increase student choice while reducing the number of units with small enrolments.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies included in the National and Global report under this Guiding Principle are:

The RMIT Student Selection and Admission Policy which guarantees pathways for students that have completed a TAFE program into a related HE undergraduate award. RMIT also sets a target for the percentage of articulating students commencing each undergraduate course.

Charles Darwin University's (CDU) provision of the opportunity of Alternative Exit awards upon partial completion of a higher level course for students who are unable to complete their studies, which is also recorded in CDU's Callista

Student Management System. After one year's study the exit qualification is a diploma and after two years an associate degree. Multiple entry and exit points improve access and success for students, as well as providing an opportunity for receiving an award for partial completion of an initial bachelor's course.

RMIT's Student Electives Policy which applies to all undergraduate programs. The minimum requirement for the Student Electives in undergraduate programs at RMIT is 24 credit points and 36 credit points respectively for three and four-year undergraduate courses. The policy aims to increase the availability of elective choice options and allow students to build courses that meet their needs and increase their options for earning credit for units already completed.

The Californian Higher Education system's (CHE) exemplary model of articulation from VE/FE community colleges to state universities (University of California and California State University systems). Just under half of all undergraduates in the state commence their study in a community college. Clear and transparent articulation arrangements exist for every course in every institution in the state. These spell out the community college units of study that must be passed, the grades that must be achieved in each selected unit and the overall Grade Points Average (GPA) that is required for entry. This is supported by a state-wide web-based articulation system that sets out the requirements for each course and articulation agreements for all community colleges and universities.

Common themes in these case studies are the importance of well-defined, transparent admission requirements (RMIT, CHE), articulation targets (RMIT, CHE), cross-sectoral exit and entry points (CDU, CHE), and a minimum elective requirement to meet the needs of individual students (RMIT).

4.4 Student-Centred Learning

Guiding Principle 4

Focusing on Student-Centred Learning inside and outside the classroom, within the workplace and community, including and ensuring students are job, career and future ready.

This Guiding Principle supports a University-wide shift to learner-centred approaches; to a stronger focus on meeting the needs of the learner. It demands that we focus less on teaching as information transfer and more on creating environments that help students become autonomous learners. It reminds us again that learning occurs in many situations and that it is the responsibility of all staff members across the University to create an environment that focuses on student-centred learning.

Heads of School Consultation

Because the Guiding Principles had not been developed at the time of the consultations, there was not an explicit focus on student-centred learning. The summary that follows therefore focuses on themes that were to some degree relevant to this Principle.

Heads of School reported that providing flexibility in timetabling to accommodate part-time and working students was challenging. Some attempt to design timetables that concentrate classes in three or four days, leaving the other days

free for work or family commitments. Relatively few HE units of study are offered outside normal business hours or, with the exception of off-shore courses, in burst or block mode. The increased cost of teaching outside normal hours was given as the main reason, though security for students was also a consideration for some. Timetabling was also identified as a major barrier to broadening student choice of electives outside their home faculty. A consistent thread running through this theme was the need for improved communication and cooperation between schools and faculties in establishing timetables.

Heads of School reported that the use of online learning varied greatly between courses and schools, depending on the teacher delivering the course and the availability of funding to develop online resources. The most common approach reported was the use of Blackboard as a repository of resources such as PowerPoint presentations and reading materials. Some expressed concern that providing such resources online encouraged non-attendance at on-campus classes. Some noted that the use of online resources could also be used to improve the consistency of courses offered on several campuses. As a group, they suggested that a consistent approach or strategy across the University is required.

The responses in the area of online learning revealed both a wide disparity in understandings of online learning and some confusion about how online learning might be used to support student learning. They also indicated that many Heads of School across the University believe that online learning is not well-supported at VU and that many staff are slow in providing online learning for students as there is a lack of both funding and specialist support to develop online resources and activities for existing units of study.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies included in the National and Global Practice report under this Guiding Principle are:

Charles Darwin University's (CDU) implementation of a university-wide transition unit of study strategy that involves customisation of the transition units for different fields of study, provision of both face-to-face and online approaches, and inclusion of an introduction to the university's geographic region.

The creative use of a project-based teaching and learning approach for an introductory first-year unit of study at Olin College (Olin) in Massachusetts. The unit is in a different field of study (business) from that of the degree (engineering) and, rather than a typical lecture-based service teaching approach, an approach that actively engages students in collaborative learning is used instead.

A well-developed approach to service learning or learning in the community at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB). The university uses service learning to both engage with its local community and to provide active collaborative learning activities that engage its students.

The widespread use of learning communities at the University of Iowa (UI) shows how this approach can be used in a large university to support student transition. This deceptively simple, relatively low-cost intervention is consistently associated with increased student engagement and improved student retention.

A common theme in these case studies is the systematic use of student-centred approaches in units of study that are taken by commencing students. These approaches include collaborative learning (Olin, CSUMB, UI), service learning (CSUMB) and university-wide units of study that are specifically designed to aid transition (CDU, CSUMB). What is also notable is the evidence-based approach taken by each university, both in terms of adopting strategies that have been shown to be effective elsewhere and collecting local evidence that is used to improve the effectiveness of the strategy in that university.

4.5 Learning, Language, Numeracy

Guiding Principle 5

Customising Learning, Language and Numeracy Development that acknowledges the educational, personal, financial, and cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population.

At the time we consulted Heads of School our conversations were guided by the dimensions of the former Commitment 3 matrix rather than the guiding principle above. Our discussions focussed largely on learning support for students – how needs are identified, what support is provided, how it is provided and how progress is monitored. The themes raised below reflect this focus.

Heads of School Consultation

Most Heads of School expressed a concern that many students are under-prepared for study at the tertiary level and struggle to succeed in their chosen course of study. Whilst most students need some assistance in developing learning, language and numeracy skills, some students have substantial needs that can lead to unsatisfactory progress.

Whilst international students rated a special mention when it came to written and oral communication, this was closely followed by the comment that many local students also had learning needs associated with language.

Many members of the teaching staff give their time freely to support students but there are others who feel that they are neither qualified or skilled to do so. Some teaching staff work collaboratively with Learning Support Services, whereas others merely refer students in need of learning support to specialist services as they do not see that it is their job to provide extra support for such students.

There was general agreement amongst all Heads of School that the demand for learning support services far outweighs its supply. It was also reported that some HE staff are unwilling to encourage students to take developmental units outside of their faculties because of the consequent loss of income.

Whilst many HE Heads of School see the University's Student Progress Policy as an irritant, rather than being for the benefit of students, VE/FE Heads of School seem to be able to quickly identify and respond to the support needs of their students prior to them becoming formally 'at risk' as is defined under this University policy.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies included in the National and Global Practice report under this Guiding Principle are:

The University of Huddersfield's (UoH) university-wide approach to identifying students in need of support with their learning in the very early stages of their course. This is achieved through the implementation of a self-administered diagnostic questionnaire and the monitoring of student attendance throughout the semester. This Yorkshire institution uses individual learning plans to assist students in strengthening their skills and employs a range of rapid intervention strategies where students appear to be failing to engage with their studies.

The clear articulation, in all University of Wollongong's (UoW) learning and teaching policies and supporting documents, of the relationships between UoW's equivalent of both our Learning Support Services and Centre for Innovative Learning and Teaching and their links with faculties. In curriculum development and review these two units collaborate with the faculties and 'sign off' on these processes. There is also a formalised referral system in place where teaching staff refer students to their equivalent of our Learning Support Services.

The extensive range of online and individualised interactive learning support, including a guaranteed turn-around time, offered by the Tutorial Support Services at El Paso Community College (EPCC) in Texas. In addition to many other learner support services, other key features are the availability of face-to-face services beyond traditional business hours and the employment of suitably qualified current students as tutors within Tutorial Support Services.

The strengths and effectiveness of the voluntary learning support program at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) called the KEYS to Academic Success program. KEYS offers students a range of choices, it contributes to an additional (certificate) qualification which appears on a student's academic transcript, it offers flexibility at times which meet student needs, and it uses both face-to-face and online learning and teaching approaches. At the request of teaching staff within faculties, KEYS is also customised to meet the needs of particular groups of students.

Common themes in these case studies are the early identification of students in need of support accompanied by rapid and active intervention (all), multiple delivery modes (UoW, EPCC, AUT), the use of peers in learning support services (EPCC) and the embedding of learning support in units of study (UoW, AUT).

4.6 Student Leadership and Development

Guiding Principle 6

Strengthening Student Leadership and Development to support the educational experience, enhance campus life, recognise the diversity of student life situations and contribute to local communities.

It has been previously stated in this report that, because learning is a social activity, students who engage with the university community are more likely to involve themselves in activities that enhance their learning. This Guiding Principle draws our attention to the fact that learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom and involves other people as well as students and staff members.

Heads of School Consultation

Many Heads of School stated that there were no formal student leadership development activities in their schools. VU's physical environment was mentioned as making it difficult to provide student leadership opportunities, due to both a lack of meeting spaces for students and the challenge of multiple campuses. It was also suggested that re-organising physical space within schools so that students had drop-in centres would enhance connectedness, build relationships and create further informal leadership opportunities.

In some schools, leadership development is directly linked to assessment tasks. For example, third year students in the Bachelor of Arts (Professional Writing) produce a literary magazine which is assessed as their graduating project. The Diploma of Business (Frontline Management) is offered through the School of Enterprise to all student Res Lifers who are on the Residence Life Committee. Evidence of activities undertaken by these students in their year's work is assessed as part of the course.

Student Associations and Clubs also provide leadership opportunities. VU osteopathy students have an organised club that runs subject-related workshops in addition to social functions. Committee members are generally third and fourth-year students who, upon moving into their fifth year, encourage second-year students to become involved. Some Heads of School suggested more student associations within faculties would develop greater engagement.

There is a range of student peer mentoring programs operating throughout VU, some formal and some quite informal. One formal program is student peer mentoring in the School of Accounting and Finance, which has taken some time to establish but is now considered very effective. Fifteen hundred first year students are assisted by 15 mentors from second or final year. Staff supervising this program believe that experience as a peer mentor or student rover in the Learning Commons is very attractive to employers. These programs provide opportunities for students to combine leadership with a strong student learning support role.

There was general consensus amongst Heads of School that VU should employ more students, particularly as tutors and mentors, as the benefits would be considerable in strengthening student engagement and improving retention.

Provision in the new Student Management System for recording a student's campus involvement during their time at VU in the form of a second transcript was proposed by some Heads of School. They argued that validation by relevant staff members should be required.

National and Global Practice

The four case studies included in the National and Global Practice report are: The Student Development Centre at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), which seeks to promote individual achievement and interpersonal growth through a wide range of programs and services designed to enhance the educational experience of all students. UTEP boasts more than 100 clubs and associations and many of the Programs that exist within the Student Development Centre provide paid employment opportunities for students. Of particular note is the Mindtracker Program which enables documentation and verification of skills developed by students outside the classroom.

The establishment of the Office of Student Leadership and Activities at Ferris State University (FSU) in Michigan, designed to encourage all students to get involved in campus life. It coordinates a range of programs, events and more than 200 Registered Student Organisations (RSOs) and provides a central location or hub called The Leadership SPOT, where students can access information about all campus activities at the one time. As part of the Leadership Development and Recognition Programs initiative, FSU is currently developing an official transcript called the Student Development Record which will have the capacity to report all extra-curricular hours committed to campus and community involvement through an online system.

The Student Leadership Challenge at Temple University (Temple) in Pennsylvania, designed to encourage the development of intrinsic values whilst also providing avenues to enable students to make a difference in their own lives and those of others, both locally and across the globe. Temple's leadership program operates at a range of levels and therefore provides students with options in terms of the amount of time and energy they are able and/or willing to commit. The program provides the opportunity to combine academic work with leadership and personal development; a concept that has been considered by VU's Student Leadership Reference Group.

The University of Guelph's (Guelph) paraprofessional helping program, which involves more than 200 Peer Helpers working in 30 different units on campus. Peers offer a wide range of support programs for students by working alongside the professional staff at this Canadian university. Peers also have the opportunity to enrol in a Peer Helper course which appears on the academic transcript after satisfactory completion. The Peer Helper Program combines the concepts of building relationships between students and between staff and students, of developing leadership to support the educational experience and enhance campus life, and of employing students on campus.

Common themes in these case studies are the diverse range of clubs and interest groups (UTEP, FSU), online systems to document and recognise student contributions to university life (UTEP, FSU, Guelph), hubs or central locations for students to connect with each other and obtain information about campus life programs (UTEP, FSU, Temple) and greater connectedness with peers and staff (all).

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Appendix 1: The Diversity of the VU Student Population

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT SUCCESS

Irrespective of student groups, sector analysis of progress rates (a key measure of student success) showed the following results:

HE students are more likely to succeed if they are:

- older
- female
- studying full time
- of a higher SES status
- from an English-speaking background

VE/FE students are more likely to succeed if they are:

- older
- working
- of a higher SES status
- first generation Australian
- from Melbourne's West

Of the four student groups identified, HE students in the 2nd Generation Australians or Full Time Workers Groups were more likely to succeed. In contrast to HE, VE/FE students in the 2nd Generation Australians or Full Time Workers Groups were less likely to succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Centre for Strategic and Economic Studies
- Student Experience Advisory Group (SEAG)
- Vice-Chancellor Professor Elizabeth Harman

STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The VU Student Experience Strategy, of which the Pro Vice-Chancellor Students has stewardship, will foster student engagement in activities that enhance learning. The factors influencing student success have informed the following guiding principles:

- Providing engaging courses and pathways that meet student needs
- Extending learning and teaching approaches that put the student at the centre
- Recognising and responding to student diversity
- Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement
- Fostering environments that enable active student learning
- Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers

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THE DIVERSITY OF THE VU STUDENT POPULATION

FEW UNIVERSITIES
ARE AS DIVERSE

STUDENT DIVERSITY AT VU

Students are the heartbeat of a university. A university's courses, its staff, its industry and community partners, and facilities are all driven by its students. To better support students, it helps to have a clear sense of who they are.

VU attracts a range of student groups, from people with no tertiary education or work experience, through to qualified professionals who study while working full time. There are undergraduates and postgraduates, local and international students, full and part-time students; VU's student population is as varied and multicultural as that of Melbourne itself.

Different student groups have different educational needs. This has to be reflected in our policies, procedures and practices.

Students depend on their university to help them succeed in life. Whether teaching them or supporting them in some other capacity, we can help students get where they want to go if we understand where they've come from.

Professor Elizabeth Harman
Vice-Chancellor and President

KEY:

SES: Socio-economic status
FE: Further Education

VE: Vocational education
HE: Higher education



A NEW REPORT

The Diversity and Performance of the Student Population Report examines aspects of the life and work of VU students and its impact on their learning at Victoria University over the period 2003-07. It is based on an analysis of data covering 350,000 unit records of student enrolments, involving 130,000 different students. It used cluster analysis to identify the 4 student groups below and the factors influencing student progression rates in 2007.

OUR FOUR STUDENT GROUPS

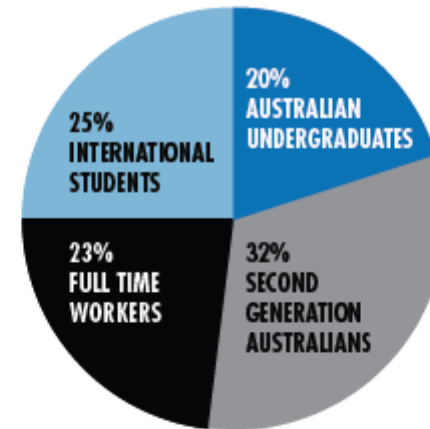
The characteristics below are the key features of each student group. There is some overlap between groups.

AUSTRALIAN UNDERGRUATES (20%)

- Relatively young
- Relatively high SES but lower than Melbourne mean
- Most are in part-time employment
- Mostly in full-time studies in HE
- 50% from homes with a second language

SECOND GENERATION AUSTRALIANS (32%)

- Relatively mature-aged
- Relatively very low SES
- Mostly not employed
- Most in part-time studies in VE and FE, with some HE
- Mainly from Asia and Africa with a second language spoken at home



FULL TIME WORKERS (23%)

- Relatively high SES but lower than Melbourne mean
- Employed mainly full-time
- Mostly part-time studies in VE and FE, with some HE
- Third generation Australians from English speaking homes

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (25%)

- Study onshore and offshore with partner universities
- VE and HE students offshore
- Mostly HE students onshore

Appendix 2: Strategy Action Framework – Master Schedule



| Strategy Action Framework - Master Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| ID | Task Name | Half 1, 2009 | | Half 2, 2009 | | Half 1, 2010 | | Half 2, 2010 | | Half 1, 2011 | | Half 2, 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | |
| 1 | Guiding Principle 1: Providing ongoing courses and pathways that meet student needs | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 1.1 - Develop, implement and evaluate a Pathways Database for both prospective and current students that includes clear and transparent articulation arrangements. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 1.2 Review management of and support for course and pathway approval processes in conjunction with faculties | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | 1.3 - Prepare a 2009-2011 Admissions and Recruitment Strategy encompassing an emphasis on enhanced student pathways and targeted future student enquiries. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | 1.4 - Develop, implement and evaluate a common unit of study currency across the FE/VE/HE sectors. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 1.5 - Develop, implement and evaluate a Student Electives Policy for courses at VU. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | 1.6 - Evaluate pathways undertaken by students across VU and identify where future pathways need to be developed. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 32 | 1.7 - Develop alternative entry and exit points in courses across each of the course clusters and sectors at VU. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 37 | 1.8 - Develop a course based on a multi-disciplinary program of study similar to the Bachelor of Multidisciplinary Studies at UTEP. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 42 | 1.9 - Strengthen the use of RPL across the University by reviewing the Learning Pathways and Qualifications Linkages Policy. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 47 | 1.10 Include relevant Course Cluster Committee and Roundtable recommendations into the course review process. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 52 | 1.11 Identify course-related staffing barriers to cross-sectoral learning and teaching and develop strategies to minimise them. | [Task bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 57 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | Split | | Summary | | External Milestone | |
| | Progress | | Project Summary | | Deadline | |

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| Strategy Action Framework - Master Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| ID | Task Name | Half 1, 2009 | | Half 2, 2009 | | Half 1, 2010 | | Half 2, 2010 | | Half 1, 2011 | | Half 2, 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O |
| 64 | Guiding Principle 2: Extending teaching and learning approaches that put the student at the centre | [Gantt bars for Guiding Principle 2] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 65 | 2.1 - Develop, implement and evaluate a University-wide approach to transition for commencing students in all Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor level courses. | [Gantt bar for 2.1] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 70 | 2.2 - Develop, implement and evaluate transition units of study that combine both extended orientation and course content. | [Gantt bar for 2.2] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 75 | 2.3 - Include active, collaborative learning approaches as a requirement for the approval of all first-year units of study. | [Gantt bar for 2.3] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 80 | 2.4 - Develop, implement and evaluate processes for the early identification of, and rapid response to, major learning gaps in disciplinary knowledge, literacy and numeracy. | [Gantt bar for 2.4] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 85 | 2.5 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the Student Assessment and Progress Policy in identifying and helping at-risk students. | [Gantt bar for 2.5] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 88 | 2.6 - Develop, pilot and evaluate a learning communities model for commencing students. | [Gantt bar for 2.6] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 93 | 2.7 - Develop, pilot and evaluate a learning in the community model for use in unit of study taken by commencing students. | [Gantt bar for 2.7] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 98 | 2.8 - Develop, deploy and evaluate learning resources for Learning in the Workplace and the Community (including templates, preparatory materials and evaluation tools) for staff, students and industry/community partners. | [Gantt bar for 2.8] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 103 | 2.9 - Review existing strategies for the induction, professional development, reward and recognition of teaching staff to ensure that they foster the changes in teaching practice required for Learning in the | [Gantt bar for 2.9] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 107 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 108 | Guiding Principle 3: Recognising and responding to student diversity | [Gantt bars for Guiding Principle 3] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 109 | 3.1 - Review existing learning and teaching policies and guidelines to incorporate the University's English Language Support and Development Strategy and Educational Transition Strategy. | [Gantt bar for 3.1] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 114 | 3.2 - Increase the embedding of language and numeracy development into course curricula through curriculum development and review requirements. | [Gantt bar for 3.2] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 119 | 3.3 - Develop, pilot and evaluate a suite of tools that will effectively and efficiently assess the language and numeracy levels of all commencing students. | [Gantt bar for 3.3] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 124 | 3.4 - Review and improve faculty-based processes to identify, support and monitor students requiring support with their learning and incorporate the use of the Student Management System to identify students | [Gantt bar for 3.4] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 129 | 3.5 - Develop in partnership with faculties a series of customised student support interventions, including online support and developmental units of study. | [Gantt bar for 3.5] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 134 | 3.6 - Extend the use of peer mentors to assist other students in developing their learning, language and numeracy skills. | [Gantt bar for 3.6] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 139 | 3.7 - Enhance the University's income support provided to students, including by reviewing current arrangements for the payment of fees by low income earners particularly within VE/FE. | [Gantt bar for 3.7] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | Split | | Summary | | External Milestone | |
| | Progress | | Project Summary | | Deadline | |

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| Strategy Action Framework - Master Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| ID | Task Name | Half 1, 2009 | | Half 2, 2009 | | Half 1, 2010 | | Half 2, 2010 | | Half 1, 2011 | | Half 2, 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 144 | Guiding Principle 4: Strengthening student relationships and partnerships through engagement | [Gantt bars for Guiding Principle 4 tasks] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 145 | 4.1 - Develop and coordinate a University-wide orientation program that is targeted in terms of content, timeliness and activities for the student groups and institutional courses on each campus. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 150 | 4.2 - Develop a targeted training program for teaching, administrative and student support staff to improve the quality of relationships with students. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 155 | 4.3 - Develop a Student Leadership strategy that provides opportunities and recognition for a diverse range of student activities, including faculty-based student societies. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 160 | 4.4 - Develop the Student Leadership Council by means of an induction and training program and an annual student leadership conference. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 165 | 4.5 - Develop strategies and resources for engaging and supporting industry and community partners in Learning in the Workplace and Community activities. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 170 | 4.6 - Create Student Experience and Student Leadership Funds to enhance the student experience post-VSU outcomes. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 175 | 4.7 - Provide an annual financial allocation to support student employment at VU | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 180 | 4.8 - Provide increased opportunities for student employment on campus to build relationships, engagement and connectedness. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 185 | 4.9 - Progress the recommendations of the Student Accommodation Futures Paper to improve access to student accommodation. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 190 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 191 | Guiding Principle 5: Fostering environments that enable active student learning | [Gantt bars for Guiding Principle 5 tasks] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 192 | 5.1 Develop and extend the Learning Commons at every campus, including by improving student access through extended opening hours where needed. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 197 | 5.2 Design and provide good quality teaching and learning spaces that allow active, collaborative learning to take place. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 202 | 5.3 Review the availability of both space and support for postgraduate research students. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 207 | 5.4 Improve and develop the number of informal places where students can gather at course, faculty and campus level. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 212 | 5.5 Increase access to the virtual learning environment to assist students, staff and VU partners, particularly for off-campus and offshore learning activities. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 217 | 5.6 Extend the use of eLearning 2.0 technologies and mobile learning technologies to enhance student-centred learning and teaching. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 222 | 5.7 Ensure that every unit has a minimum online presence that is consistent with its learning outcomes. | [Gantt bar] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | Progress | | Project Summary | | Deadline | |

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| Strategy Action Framework - Master Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| ID | Task Name | Half 1, 2009 | | | Half 2, 2009 | | | Half 1, 2010 | | | Half 2, 2010 | | | Half 1, 2011 | | | Half 2, 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O |
| 227 | Guiding Principle 6: Assisting students to make informed decisions about their education and careers | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 228 | 6.1 - Establish a pre-entry advising system which includes outreach to primary and secondary schools, community and industry organisations, and prospective international students. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 233 | 6.2 In partnership with faculties, review the course information available to prospective and enquiring students in terms of its comprehensiveness, accuracy and accessibility. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 238 | 6.3 - Establish a Student Advising Centre that provides commencing Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor cohorts with mandatory advising and optional advising services to other students. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 243 | 6.4 - Develop an efficient system that enables the early identification of at-risk students by faculties to link with early active intervention in partnership with the Student Advising Centre | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 248 | 6.5 - Develop an online advising service to supplement face-to-face advising. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 253 | 6.6 - Provide opportunities for peer advisers to be employed in the Student Advising Centre. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 258 | 6.7 - Develop a VU Advising Council with members from each faculty and each group of specialist advisers to establish and enhance a triage role for the Student Advising Centre in terms of a referral system. | [Task bar spanning from start of 2009 to end of 2011] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date: Thu 19/02/09 | | Task | | Milestone | | External Tasks | | Split | | Summary | | External Milestone | | Progress | | Project Summary | | Deadline | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Page 4 of 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | \\fvs1.ad.vu.edu.au\shared\Making VUIC3 Strategies for Student Success\Gantt Charts - Strategy Action Framework\20090219 Strategy Action Framework - Master V.5 CN.mpp | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |